JOHN TEEL.

DECEMBER 30, 1831.

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JANUARY 29, 1830.

Mr. BURGES, from the Committee on Revolutionary Claims, made the following

REPORT:

The Committee on Revolutionary Claims, to which said case was referred, report:

That the petitioner sets forth, that, in the year 1779, and after the 1st day of September, whilst in the service of the United States as an enlisted soldier, he volunteered his services to carry despatches from Sullivan's store, in Northampton county, Pennsylvania, to Wilkesburg, in said State, directed to Col. Butler.

That it was a very hazardous undertaking, the snow being very deep, with a crust on it, and upon which he travelled with snow shoes. Fifty dollars per day was offered to any one who would do this duty, and that he did do it faithfully, performing the trip in nine and a half days, for which he has not, to this day, received any compensation, and now asks the pay then promised, which amounts to the sum of 475 dollars.

The petitioner makes oath to the facts above stated, and they are further sustained by the deposition of John Shaffer.

The petitioner is now, and has been for some time, on the pension list, is old and infirm, and has an aged and infirm wife.

On this state of facts, two questions arise: First, What effect, by increasing the amount of this claim, ought the delay of payment, now 48 years, to have upon it? And, second, What money was current when the contract was made; and what amount, in silver or gold, if paid then, would have discharged it? This committee have not, it is believed, allowed interest on the finally ascertained amount of accounts, either for supplies furnished, or services rendered during the revolutionary war, where those accounts had remained open until adjusted and settled by them. On the 27th of February, 1783, Congress resolved that all accounts, the settlement of which had not been provided for by reference to the States, or by commissioners appointed for States, or Departments, or otherwise, should be settled at the Treasury; and all balances found due before January, 1782, be placed on interest in common with other debts due from the United States. Interest had been provided for on all balances ascertained by the States, by commissioners appointed by Congress, "or otherwise;" and this resolution provided a mode of settlement, and the allowance of interest for all other claims due before January, 1782. Had this claim been settled, therefore, in any of those several methods, interest would have been allowed upon it from that date. It would have been funded with other outstanding debts of the United States, by the law of 1790, authorizing the holders of such debts to subcribe their several amounts to the loan to the United States for payment of the domestic dept. By this system, the United States paid the interest then due thereon, by a three per cent. stock, on interest, payable quarterly; one-third of the principal in a six per cent stock, with interest after, or deferred for ten years, and then payable in like manner; and the other two-thirds thereof in a like stock, with interest accruing forthwith, and payable quarterly. By this system, the domestic creditors of the United States, excepting those holding three per cent. stocks, have received payment of their debts from savings made by the United States out of interest which would have grown due on the three per cent. stocks, had they been six; and on the deferred stocks, if interest had been paid on them forthwith. The whole domestic debt, except the three per cent. stocks, has, in this manner, been sunk. In consideration of compound interest paid on one part, the creditors relinquished all payments of interest on two others, one for a limited, and the other for an unlimited time; and the United States, prudently appropriating this relinquished interest, have, therewith, redeemed all the stock issued by them for the original principal of the domestic debt. If, thereupon, a like appropriation of relinquished interest on the three per cent. stocks had been applied to a redemption of the principal of those stocks, the whole revolutionary domestic debt would, in about twenty-two years from that time, have been paid.

It may be seen that the funding system secured to creditors of the United States about 80 per cent. of their debts, and that, in consideration of that security, they relinquished to the nation the other 20 per cent.

Had the claim of the petitioner been settled by any of the several methods aforesaid, and the amount found due to him for his services as proved, and, at the rate of compensation promised to him, been funded, according to the principles of the funding system, he would have received up to this time about $8,448.

It is, however, necessary to inquire into the contract with reference to the value of the money current when it was made, and what amount of Spanish milled dollars would then have paid for the services rendered under it. These services were performed in the Winter of 1779–80. On the 18th of March, 1780, continental money was forty for one, as it appears by a resolution of Congress, passed on the 28th of June, in that year. At the time these services were rendered, fifty continental paper dollars could not have been worth one and a quarter Spanish dollars. If that amount had been allowed on settlement at the Treasury, and the same had been passed through the operations of the funding system, it would now amount to about $200. The committee do not feel themselves authorized to allow interest on old claims, the amount and value of which have not long ago been ascertained by law, and thereby in some sort offer a premium on delay in the settlement of them. Much less can they be satisfied that the services rendered by the petitioner could, at that time, have been obtained at the rate of compensation charged by him, and in continental money, then so much depreciated in value, that, in a few weeks thereafter, it fell out of circulation. In this question the resolutions of Congress hold out some light for conducting to a correct decision. On the 29th of February, 1780, it was resolved that all advances and allowances in pay and rations (except for extra services) made since January, 1777, to officers or soldiers in the army, were made in consideration of the depreciation of the paper currency. In May 23, 1776, the pay of issuing commissaries and forage masters was, by a resolution of Congress, fixed at $40 per month, and four rations. The pay of the same kind of officers was, in May 11th, 1779, raised by a like resolution to $80 per month, and $10 for subsistence. This increase of the amount in money was not in fact meant as full payment, but on account of depreciation, and, though doubling the nominal monthly wages, yet only shows that the price in gold or silver was intended to be, as it was at first, $40 per month. So far as this may be a rule to determine what amount in Spanish dollars was intended to be paid to the petitioner, it would induce the committee to place it at $25 per day, amounting in the whole to $237. It is not credible that the contract was made, and that he was to render such services, and receive nothing if he failed to render them, for little more than one dollar per day. It is much more likely that, because continental money was almost out of circulation, and these services extremely hazardous and absolutely necessary to be performed, it was intended to pay him $50 per day in silver coin if he succeeded in performing them. These considerations incline the committee to that opinion, because they might, by a different course, do great injustice to the petitioner; and the United States being indemnified by saving the interest for so many years, they are satisfied that the petitioner has made out his case, and ought to receive at this time the full amount of the sum charged in his account.

Wherefore, the committee resolve, that the claim of John Teel be allowed, and that a bill for that purpose be reported to the House.

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Wherefore, the committee resolve, that the claim of John Teel be allowed, and that a bill for that purpose be reported to the House.